

REMARKS

Applicants request favorable reconsideration and allowance of the subject application in view of the preceding amendments and the following remarks.

Claims 20-22, 26-32, 37, 41, 48, 49, 52 and 53 are presented for consideration.

Claims 20, 26-31, 37, 41, 48, 49 and 52 are independent. Claims 40, 46, 47, 50 and 51 have been canceled without prejudice or disclaimer. Applicants reserve the right to file a continuing application directed to the subject matter of the canceled claims. No new matter has been added.

Applicants note with appreciation that claims 20-22, 26-32, 37, 41, 48, 49 and 51-53 have been allowed over the art of record. To expedite allowance of this application, Applicants have canceled claims 40, 46, 47, 50 and 51 without prejudice or disclaimer.

Applicants request favorable reconsideration and withdrawal of the rejections set forth in the above-noted Office Action.

Claim 46 was rejected under the judicially created doctrine of obviousness-type double patenting as being unpatentable over claim 1 of the U.S. Patent No. 6,252,648 to Hase et al. in view of claim 16 of the Hase et al. patent. Claim 46 having been canceled, this rejection has become moot and should be withdrawn. Such favorable indication is requested.

Claim 47 was rejected under the judicially created doctrine of obviousness-type double patenting as being unpatentable over claim 1 of the Hase et al. patent in view of claim 16 of the Hase et al. patent as applied to claim 46 above, and further in view of claim 12 of the Hase et al. patent. Claim 47 having been canceled, this rejection has become moot and should be withdrawn. Such favorable indication is requested.

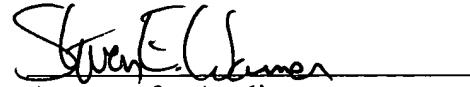
Turning now to the art rejection, claims 40 and 50 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) as being anticipated by U.S. Patent No. 5,454,347 to Shibata et al. Applicants submit that the cited art does not teach many features of the present invention, as previously recited in these claims. Therefore, this rejection is respectfully traversed.

Nevertheless, as discussed above, to expedite allowance of this application, Applicants have canceled claims 40, 46, 47, 50 and 51 without prejudice or disclaimer. All pending claims, namely, claims 20-22, 26-32, 37, 41, 48, 49, 52 and 53 being in allowable, Applicants submit that the instant application is in condition for allowance. Accordingly, Applicants request favorable reconsideration, withdrawal of the rejections set forth in the above-noted Office Action and an early Notice of Allowance.

Applicants also request that the Examiner contact their undersigned representative should any matters be deemed outstanding precluding allowance of this application.

Applicants' undersigned attorney may be reached in our Washington, D.C. office by telephone at (202) 530-1010. All correspondence should continue to be directed to our below-listed address.

Respectfully submitted,



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